

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 MCT-01
ACDA-07 ARA-06 EA-07 NEA-10 /106 R

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AF/W:TWMSMITH

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 020927

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, PINS, UNSC, DM

SUBJECT:GPRB REQUEST FOR SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON
JANUARY 16 INCIDENT

REF: A)USUN 213 B) USUN 214 (NOTAL)

1. THE DEPARTMENT'S KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAPPENED IN BENIN
ON MORNING OF JANUARY 16 IS INCOMPLETE. AN UNIDENTIFIED
FORCE, ALLEGEDLY CONSISTING IN PART OF "WHITE FOREIGN
MERCENARIES" LANDED AT COTONOU AIRPORT IN THE EARLY MORNING
HOURS OF JANUARY 16 IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW
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THE GOVERNMENT OF MATHIEU KEREKOU. GPRB FORCES REPULSED
THE ATTACKERS WHO WITHDREW AFTER A FEW HOURS IN THE SAME
AIRCRAFT IN WHICH THEY CAME.

2. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY WERE IN ATTACKING FORCE BUT
THEY MAY HAVE NUMBERED ABOUT 100. THE FOUR ENGINE PLANE
THAT BROUGHT THEM IN HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY IDENTIFIED AS A

DC-7, DC-8, AND ILYUSHIN-18.

3. THE ATTACKERS MAY HAVE INTENDED TO LINK UP WITH ANTI-GPRB FORCES AFTER LANDING BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO DO SO. SOME REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THE ATTACKERS WERE NOT PARTICULARLY AGGRESSIVE AND THAT THE GPRB

HAD LITTLE DIFFICULTY IN REPELLING THEM. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE INCIDENT MAY HAVE BEEN STAGED BY GPRB PRESIDENT KEREKOU TO CREATE AN INCIDENT IN WHICH THE PEOPLE'S MINDS WOULD BE TAKEN OFF OF BENIN'S FOOD PROBLEMS AND TO ROOT OUT POTENTIAL OPPOSITION IN ORDER TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POWER. EMBASSY COTONOU STATES THAT IT HAS FOUND NO ONE WHO SAW A BATTLE OF ANY KIND WITH ONE SIDE SHOOTING AT THE OTHER. THE INVADERS ATTACKED THE PRESIDENCY WHICH IS USED ONLY ON CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS. THEY APPEARED TO BE NONCHALANT. NEITHER THE POLICE DEPARTMENT NOR THE RADIO STATION WERE HIT BY FIRE. HOWEVER THERE APPARENTLY WAS SOME HEAVY FIRING REPORTED NEAR THE AIRPORT AFTER THE PLANE TOOK OFF.

4. ON JANUARY 20, PRESIDENT KEREKOU CONVENED THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS TO LOOK AT WEAPONS CAPTURED FROM THE ATTACKERS. OUR EMBASSY REPORTS THAT THEY HAD VARIOUSLY ARABIC AND CYRILLIC MARKINGS AND IDENTIFIED SOME WEAPONS AS OF BELGIAN AND U.S. ORIGIN. KEREKOU TALKED TO THE ASSEMBLED PRESS AND DIPLOMATS ABOUT "SUPPOSEDLY CIVILIZED COUNTRIES, THE LANGUAGE OF ONE OF WHICH WE SPEAK HERE TODAY, WHO HAVE SENT BARBARIC MERCENARIES TO FORMERLY UNCIVILIZED BENIN." CONFIDENTIAL

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KEREKOU USED THE OCCASION TO ATTACK INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM, NEOCOLONIALISM, APARTHEID AND OVERLY RICH COUNTRIES. HE ALSO ACCUSED THE "CAPITALIST PRESS" OF HAVING ALREADY DISTORTED THE TRUTH BY SAYING THAT THE COUP WAS AN INTERNAL AFFAIR AND STATED THAT IT COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN MOUNTED WITH OUTSIDE COMPLICITY. WE HAVE NO REPORTS THAT THE GPRB ASSOCIATES THE USG WITH THIS INCIDENT IN ANY WAY EXCEPT TO NOTE THE GPRB STATEMENT THAT THE "MERCENARIES HAD TO ABANDON SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF WAR MATERIAL, ARMS AND FRENCH, U.S., BELGIAN AND MOROCCAN AMMUNITION."

5. THE USG WAS NOT IN ANY WAY INVOLVED IN THIS INCIDENT. MISSION MAY SO STATE IF SUCH AN ALLEGATION IS MADE. VANCE

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 29-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: GS
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